

Virginia's Turning Point Initiative



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Why Turning Point?

■ Public health infrastructure is crumbling

- Lack of continuity in leadership at state/nation
- Less than 3% of health care expenditures devoted to prevention
- Limited access to data in understandable format that is comparable across states
- General public and decision-makers take our achievements for granted (increase in life span)
- Need to address public health role in the safety net
- New skills needed for public health workforce



Why Turning Point?

- Greater emphasis needed on education about the lifestyle factors that contribute to the majority of deaths in the 1990's
 - 70% are related to lifestyle, 20% are due to environmental and genetic factors, and 10% are due to lack of access
 - Virginia has a higher burden of chronic disease than the national average
 - Estimated that 3/4 of health care costs are for chronic diseases



Why Turning Point?

◆ New voices needed for public health to become more visible influential

- The community sees public health as immunizations and indigent health care
- Public does not understand core functions of assessment, policy development and assurance
- Public health agencies are often not the most effective advocates
- Use community leaders as advocates for strengthening the public health system



Why Turning Point Now?

- Market-driven changes in health care
- Changing role of government
- Consumers are demanding accountability
- Policy-makers expect intersectoral collaboration
- Shifting expectations and responsibility



Virginia's Initiative

- Statewide initiative with three local partnerships: the New Century Council, Norfolk, and Prince William
- Vision: improve the health of communities
- Year one: Community Outreach
- Year two: Analysis of options



Four Goal Areas

- Obtain community input on future roles and responsibilities for public health
- Improve elected officials understanding and value for public health
- Increase communities capacity to assess health needs
- Ensure workforce training of skills needed to successfully carryout future roles



Virginia's Approach to Turning Point

■ Community Outreach

- Completed a random sample telephone survey of 800 households
- Held focus group discussions with community leaders around the state
- Regional Forums provide the community an opportunity to be heard
- Consumer survey of clinic and environmental health programs underway



Current Status

■ Telephone Survey

- 1994: 50% of Virginians could not name a service provided by LHDs
- 1998: 35% of Virginians could not name a service provided by LHDs
- Those that could overwhelmingly indicated immunization as the primary activity of public health



Current Status

■ Telephone Survey

- Virginians define public health as the “Health of the Community”
- Pollution cited as the primary health concern and also as the major reason health had declined. Cancer another critical concern
- Ensuring safe drinking water received the highest rating as a “Very important” activity



Current Status

■ Focus Groups

- Community education on health issues was the consensus for the top priority of public health in the future
- Participants felt the health department should play a role in assuring primary health care services but not necessarily providing them
- The collection of health information is cumbersome with few usable products



Current Status

■ Regional Forums

- Participants represented public health partners and other interest groups
- Turning Point cannot lose sight of “traditional public health functions” - communicable disease control and environmental health during this strategic planning process



Virginia's Approach to Turning Point

- Interim Report distributed
 - 500 Copies of the Full Text
 - 2500 Copies of the Promotional Piece
 - Available on the Turning Point Web Site
- Future Scenario Planning Completed
- Internal Assessment Underway



Virginia's Approach to Turning Point

■ Key Issues

- Health education, communication, public awareness
- Access to Health Care Services
- Communicable Disease Control
- Environmental Health Protection
- Health Information



Virginia's Approach to Turning Point

■ Next Steps

- Workgroups will focus on key areas over the course of the summer and develop a “white paper” with specific strategies to move public health forward
- Work with 3M group to draw a closer link between medicine and public health
- Steering Committee will analyze information and submit recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly



Where Do We Go From Here?

- Influence on current strategic plan
- Robert Wood Johnson site visit
- Legislative or Study Commission



Where Do We Go From Here?

- Review of public health laws
- Health economics of prevention
- Social marketing education campaign
- Workforce development issues
- Public health institute or authority
- Explore public health's focus: the individual or the community



Conclusion

- Two years is not much time; there is still work to be done
- Community engagement was critical as a first step in this process of strengthening public health
- Market forces are in our favor
- Success will depend on involvement from the private sector and the community